

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
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AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 07835

LIMDIS

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC ONLY

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP
SUBJECT: VISIT OF UAW PRESIDENT FRASER TO MADRID

1. UAW PRESIDENT DOUGLAS FRASER VISITED MADRID OCT 17-19, AND MET WITH SOCIALIST UGT (SECGEN REDONDO AND OTHER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS, METALWORKERS FEDERATION, FORD/VALENCIA LOCAL DELEGATION, AND CHRYSLER/MADRID LOCAL DELEGATION), INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST USO (SECGEN ZUFIAUR AND PRO-MERGER WITH UGT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS), BASQUE STV (VICE PRESIDENT LEUNDA, SECGEN ECHEVERRIA, AND INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY AGIRREZABAL), AND PSOE SECGEN FELIPE GONZALEZ. FRASER ALSO LUNCHEDED WITH AMBASSADOR AND HELD PRESS CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY UGT. FRASER, ON HIS WAY TO IMF CONGRESS IN MUNICH, STOPPED IN LONDON AS WELL AS HERE. MADRID PROGRAM WAS ARRANGED BY IMF MADRID REPRESENTATIVE CARLOS
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PARDO (UGT).

2. FRASER PASSED ON BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS MEETINGS TO LABATT AS FOLLOWS. REDONDO HAD EMPHASIZED CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF NEXT FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE ANTICIPATED PLANT ELECTIONS (DEADLINE NOVEMBER 15), NOTING UGT'S LACK OF FUNDS (FOR NEEDED ELECTION CAMPAIGN) AS COMPARED

TO APPARENTLY MORE AFFLUENT COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS' COMMISSIONS (SWC). IN RESPONSE, FRASER HAD INDICATED UAW WILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE A "SUBSTANTIAL SUM" TO UGT WITHOUT DELAY. THE UAW GRANT WOULD BE MADE THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL METALWORKERS FEDERATION (IMF), WHOSE SECGEN WAS UAW MAN HERMAN REBHAN. FRASER ALSO NOTED HE PLANNED TO APPROACH UNITED STEELWORKERS (USA) AND MACHINISTS (IAM) DURING MUNICH CONGRESS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SEEK MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE UGT FROM THOSE UNIONS. WHATEVER THEIR RESPONSE, HOWEVER, THE UAW INTENDED TO GO AHEAD WITH ITS GRANT.

3. PSOE LEADE GONZALEZ HAD "COME ON STRONGLY" AT START OF HIS TALK WITH FRASER, COMPLAINING TO UAW PRESIDENT THAT AMERICANS DIDN'T REALLY "UNDERSTAND" THE SPANISH SOCIALISTS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT AMERICANS WERE NOT POPULAR IN MANY SPANISH CIRCLES DUE TO "U.S. SUPPORT OF THE FRANCO REGIME". FRASER HAD FELT OBLIGED TO PLACE THINGS IN A SOMEWHAT MORE BALANCED PERSPECTIVE, REMINDING GONZALEZ THAT AMERICANS HAD BEEN WATCHING THE SPANISH TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY WITH GREAT INTEREST AND ADMIRATION. HE HAD ALSO SAID THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT AMERICANS WERE ANY LESS UNDERSTANDING WITH RESPECT TO SPANISH SOCIALISTS THAN THEY WERE WITH RESPECT TO OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS - WEST GERMAN, BRITISH, OR WHATEVER. FRASER, ON BEHALF OF HIS

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UNION, HAD EXTENDED AN INVITATION TO GONZALEZ TO VISIT THE U.S., AND THE PSOE LEADER HAD ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE. (THE UAW INVITATION TO GONZALEZ WAS LATER CONFIRMED DURING THE FRASER PRESS CONFERENCE ON OCTOBER 18.)

4. COMMENT. FRASER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE (HERSELF POLITICALLY-ORIENTED AND A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR) AT A NUMBER OF HIS MEETINGS. THE FRASERS WERE LAST HERE FOR A 3-DAY VISIT IN 1969 IN CONNECTION WITH DISMISSALS OF UGT MILITANTS AT THE CHRYSLER/MADRID PLANT. THE NEW UAW PRESIDENT--VERY ARTICULATE AND WELL-INFORMED--MADE AN EXCELLENT IMPRESSION FROM WHAT WE HAVE HEARD FROM TRADE UNION SOURCES. AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, HE FIELDDED QUESTIONS ON A VARIETY OF LABOR MATTERS INCLUDING UAW RE-AFFILIATION WITH THE AFL-CIO (HE WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ON THAT SCORE WITH RESPECT TO THE NEAR FUTURE), THE USO SPLIT (HE PERSONALLY FAVORED THE PRO-MERGER ELEMENT), MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES (HE SUPPORTED TRADE UNION COOPERATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH EXISTING LABOR PROBLEMS), SALE OF FOREIGN CARS IN THE U.S. (HE EXPRESSED STRONG FREE TRADE VIEWS), APPROPRIATENESS OF TRADE UNION TIES TO

POLITICAL PARTIES (THIS WAS A MATTER OF HISTORICAL
DEVELOPMENT WHICH VARIED FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY--
ALTHOUGH AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT WAS NOT FORMALLY LINKED
TO ANY PARTY, "95 PERCENT OF AMERICAN LABOR LEADERS WERE
DEMOCRATS"), ETC. BEFORE LEAVING, FRASER TOLD LABATT
HE WAS CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF SENDING OVER SOME
SPANISH-SPEAKING UAW OFFICERS TO OFFER ASSISTANCE (PRE-
SUMABLY TO UGT AND POSSIBLY STV) IN ORGANIZING TECHNIQUES.
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